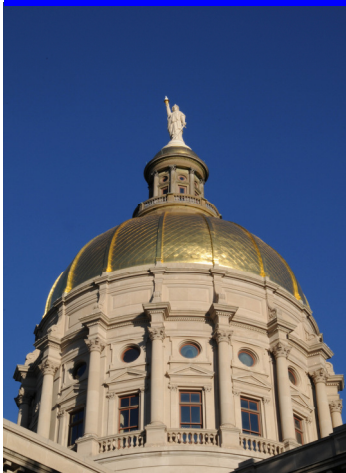


MARCH 26, 2010 - DAY 30

## Upper Chamber Report

Natalie Strong, Deputy Press Director  
Kallarin Richards, Editor in Chief



### CROSSOVER DAY SPECIAL REPORT

## Legislative Day 30: Sen. Judson Hill's Health Care Choice Expansion Passes Senate



*Sen. Judson Hill's bill to purchase health insurance across state lines passes Senate*

By Matt Colvin

MARIETTA (March 26, 2010) – Legislation aimed at increasing competition among health insurance providers by expanding Georgian's private health care choices outside the state passed the Georgia Senate Wednesday. State Sen. Judson Hill (R-Marietta) authored Senate Bill 407 that would allow Georgia health care customers to buy approved out-of-state health care insurance plans.

"Unlike our Democratic leaders in Washington D.C, Georgia is looking to free-market solutions to bring down costs and expand access for many uninsured or underinsured Georgians," said Hill. "My bill allows Georgians the freedom to choose health insurance in pre-approved states and opens up competition for the health care business in our state, bringing Georgia's families many more private health insurance options at lower premiums. The ability of patients to find quality health care at affordable prices should not be hampered. I am strongly committed to providing Georgians common-sense principles like Senate Bill 407 designed to expand access to quality care, increase choices with a competitive market for health insurance, and keep costs low free of any Federal involvement."

Hill's legislation will give the Georgia state insurance commissioner authority to identify at least five states with health insurance laws and regulations substantially consistent with Georgia law. The state could then

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*\* Follow the State Senate on Twitter at GASenatePress*

approve individual health insurance policies for sale in Georgia that have been approved in those states and as long as the insurer is an authorized insurer in Georgia.

SB 407 also directs the insurance commissioner to form a group of like-minded states for establishing rules of reciprocity for the approval of comprehensive individual medical and surgical health insurance policies among the participating states. Hill noted this will ensure consumer protection with the states coming together to approve quality, highly-respected insurance providers as part of this legislation. Out-of-state companies offering health benefit plans under SB 407 will be subject to regulation by the commissioner regarding the enforcement of the contractual benefits under the health benefit plan, including the prompt payment of insurance claims.

Hill first introduced legislation allowing cross-state purchasing of health insurance in 2007. This is his latest effort to provide Georgians with lower costs and improved choices relating to health insurance. Last week Hill's Senate Bill 317 passed out of the Senate which would prohibit mandatory participation in any health care system.

SB 407 now heads to the Georgia House of Representatives for consideration. □

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## **Sen. Smith Champions Educators Salary Protection Act**

By Kallarin Richards

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010) – The Georgia Senate today voted in favor of protecting teachers' salaries by passing Senate Bill 515, the Educators Salary Protection Act, by a margin of 35-11. The measure, sponsored by Senator Preston Smith (R-Rome), seeks to protect Georgia teachers from additional furlough days.

“By passing this bill, the Senate took a crucial step today to protect teachers from unnecessary furloughs. This is not an attempt to control local school boards; rather it says to teachers that we value their service,” said Smith. “Our children’s future success and achievements are greatly enhanced when they have the support of their teachers. These individuals provide an invaluable service to Georgia’s children, and they deserve any support we can give them.”

The proposal prevents school systems with more than six percent of unencumbered funds in its reserve accounts from furloughing teachers, when funding is readily available to prevent the furloughs. The state has exhausted a reserve account of almost \$1.8 billion over the last two years. Most of the reserve funding went to education spending. □



## Senate Democrats prevent Constitutional Amendment, but Republicans prevail in eliminating State Ad Valorem Tax

By Raegan Weber

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010) – Today, a majority of the Georgia Senate Democrats voted against allowing the people to vote on having a say in their property taxes by voting against Senate Resolution 1287. However, Republicans recovered for the people of Georgia by prevailing with Senate Bill 517, which will remove the quarter mil state ad valorem tax.

Georgia property owners continue to contact their legislators asking about tax relief, in particular property owners. In response, State Sen. Bill Heath (R-Bremen) proposed to eliminate Georgia's state ad valorem tax. Because SR 1287 was a Constitutional Amendment, it required two-thirds vote in the Senate and the House before going to the voters for approval on the November 2010 ballot.

“Senate Republicans stood up for Georgians today when Senate Democrats chose not to allow them a voice in how they are taxed. This bill eliminates the state's portion of a tax on the American Dream, which is home ownership,” said Heath. “Homeowners need as much financial relief as possible and should not be over taxed. Today's vote only demonstrates who stand with Georgia property owners and who stands with the government.”

The State of Georgia currently levies an ad valorem tax on all property, and is a component of local property tax bills. The state millage rate is a quarter mil (.25/\$1,000 assessed value). Counties argue that the state requires them to do property assessments and to collect ad valorem tax. Heath's bill is a major step in allowing local governments to have more control over property taxation. Removing the state ad valorem tax will have no effect on counties, cities and school funding. The prohibition of the tax begins once state reserve funds reach \$500 million. □



*Sen. Bill Heath urges Senate to support legislation to eliminate property ad valorem taxes*

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## Senate Passes Bill Putting Spotlight on Pledge of Allegiance and Georgia History

By Raegan Weber

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010) - Senate Bill 518, which amends Georgia code to include the study of the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Georgia flag in elementary and secondary schools history curriculum, passed the Senate unanimously. The bill was sponsored by Sen. Jeff Mullis (R- Chickamauga).

“Throughout our country's rich history, men and women have bravely given their lives under our nation and state flags. We owe it to these brave soldiers to teach our children about this heritage and how the Pledge of Allegiance and Georgia's flag have played a significant role in our history,” said Mullis. “It is only by learning from

our past, that we can truly appreciate the gifts that we have all been given as Georgians and as Americans.”

The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag, was originally written in August, 1892 by an American Baptist minister and active social activist, Francis Bellamy. The Pledge was first used in public schools on October 12, 1892 during Columbus Day celebrations, after a proclamation made by President Benjamin Harrison. Over 12 million children recited the Pledge of Allegiance that day, thereby beginning a school day ritual. On June 22, 1942, the Pledge of Allegiance was recognized as the official national pledge, by the U.S Congress.

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The current Georgia state flag is based on the first national flag of the Confederacy (the "Stars and Bars") and consists of a field of three horizontal bars of equal width, two red separated by a white bar in the center. In the upper left corner is a square blue canton the width of two bars. In the center of the canton is a circle of 13 white stars, symbolizing Georgia and the other 12 original states that formed the United States of America. Within the circle of stars is Georgia's coat of arms (the central design on the state seal) immediately above the words "In God We Trust" -- both in gold. □

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## Senate Approves Davis' Golf Hall of Fame, Public Safety Measures

By Matt Colvin

ATLANTA (March 24, 2010) – The Georgia Senate overwhelmingly joined Sen. Hardie Davis (D-Augusta) Friday in support of two important pieces of legislation authored by the Augusta legislator. Davis' bills focused on ending the state-run Georgia Golf Hall of Fame Authority (Senate Bill 449) and improving oversized vehicle safety on Georgia's roads (Senate Bill 526).



*Weeds entrap Augusta's Golf Hall of Fame as the facility sits unused*

"I want to thank my fellow Senators for helping me pass common-sense legislation aimed to help our local community and the people of Georgia," said Davis. "With the Golf Hall of Fame Authority removed, the state can save burdensome operating costs for this Hall of Fame and Augusta can move forward utilizing the property to our best interests and hopefully turn it into an important asset to our area and its residents."

Senate Bill 449 would abolish the state authority which oversees operation of the Golf Hall of Fame in Augusta, alleviating the state government from having to maintain and upkeep the property. Davis mentioned the property has been largely unused for the last 4 years and allowing the city of Augusta to assume control over the Hall of Fame site would give the best chance to find a long-term solution in the use of the property.

SB 526 brings Georgia code in line with federal safety guidelines relating to large transport vehicles traveling on public roads. Davis' measure would add larger warning flags to oversized vehicles, increase penalties for violators of oversized vehicle safety violations, and require the Department of Driver Safety to establish training and certification programs for operators of oversized vehicles.

The bill also enacts policy to modernize crosswalk technology to increase safety for pedestrians and drivers.

"Providing safe and secure roads for Georgia citizens and its guests should always be a top priority for your elected officials and I am pleased the Senate acted to help protect drivers all around the state," said Davis.

SB 449 was approved 42 to 4 and SB 493 passed by a 49 to 1 vote. Both measures now move to the Georgia House of Representatives for consideration. □

## Cagle Praises Passage of Common Sense Bill to Save Taxpayer Dollars

By Jaillene Hunter

Atlanta, GA (March 26, 2010)– The Georgia State Senate today passed S.B. 502, sponsored by State Appropriations Chairman Jack Hill, which will cut spending on State Boards, State Authorities, Commissions and Councils.

“This is just one in a series of bills the State Senate has passed this session intended to save taxpayer money and help to balance our budget in an economy where every dollar counts. The purpose of S.B. 502 is very simple: compensation for members of State Boards, Authorities, Commissions and Councils will now be restricted to only the actual transportation costs to attend meetings. Balancing the budget and providing more jobs in this economy are at the forefront of the Senate’s agenda and will remain my top priority.



“While we have some very difficult budget decisions ahead of us, we will continue to look for any opportunity - large or small - to cut spending and position our state for greater flexibility. Chairman Hill’s commitment to conservative principles in the midst of a difficult budget year is commendable,” said Lt. Governor Casey Cagle.

Currently, there are over 150 State Boards, Authorities, Commission and Councils comprised of members who are eligible for per diem expenses. This bill provides that nonelected members of State Authorities, Boards, Commissions and Councils are not allowed to receive any form of compensation for their service, except for reimbursement for actual transportation costs in connection with attendance at meetings. □

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## Senate votes to Prevent Coercive Abortions

By Kallarin Richards

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010) – The Georgia State Senate today voted to prevent women in Georgia from being forced to have an abortion against their will. Under Senate Bill 529, authored by Sen. Chip Pearson (R-Dawsonville), criminal abortions will include unlawfully coercive abortions, or with the intent to prevent a birth based on the gender or race of the unborn child.

“Georgia should have the proper protections in place for women who may be in danger of coercion. The numbers tell the true story; when 64 percent of abortions involve coercion, we clearly need to give women recourse to protect their personal decisions,” said Pearson. “It’s also imperative that as a civil society, we protect the unborn from gender and race selection.”

The bill defines the offenses of a criminal abortion to be when a person performs an abortion with the knowledge that a pregnant woman is being coerced, with the intent to have an abortion based on race, color or gender, or with the knowledge that a pregnant woman is seeking an abortion based on race, color or gender. The bill also

allows women to recover civil damages if they receive such an abortion, and ensures that they would not be held criminally responsible.

In a recent article from The Economist, the author coined the term “gendercide” to describe the gender and race selection that has wiped out at least 100 million girls across the globe. The article went on to note that “the cumulative consequence for societies of such individual actions is catastrophic.”

Even Secretary of State Hilary Clinton agrees, saying that “Unfortunately with technology, parents are able to use sonograms to determine the sex of a baby, and to abort girl children simply because they’d rather have a boy.”

According to Americans United for Life, nine states currently have some form of coercive abuse prevention laws and three states have sex-selection abortion laws. The Atlantic Magazine notes that Georgia is joining seven other states in its effort to prevent sex or race-selection abortions. □

## **Sen. Buckner Leads the Senate to Pass Legislation to Protect Local School Systems**

By Kallarin Richards

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010) – Sen. Gail Buckner (D-Morrow) championed legislation to a passing vote in the Senate today that cracks down on unethical behavior in local school boards. Senate Bill 426 takes action against school board members who contribute to a school system losing its accreditation.

“When local school systems face unprecedented fiscal challenges and are struggling to provide basic education services to our children, we need to ensure that those who are governing our schools are doing so with the best intentions,” said Buckner. “We cannot leave the future of our children and education system in the hands of those who do not have students’ best interests at heart, and this legislation allows us to more effectively manage school boards.”

According to Buckner, the overwhelming number of school board members approach their position with a professional and dedicated attitude. Only those board members who violate the code of ethics will be impacted.

SB 426 prohibits school board members from receiving their salary or per diem reimbursement should they be

named in a report by an accrediting agency as having directly contributed to the school system losing its accreditation. The report must specifically cite that the board member violated policies or standards of the accrediting agency, resulting in the school system failing to attain accreditation.

After the report has been filed from the accrediting agency, the implicated board member has the right to appeal to the State Board of Education. The appeal must be filed within ten days in order to be considered by the state board members.

In 2008, the Clayton County Board of Education lost its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) due to unethical behavior including micromanaging, misuse of funds, conflicts of interest, abuses of power and bid tampering. Over 48,000 students attend Clayton County schools and faced the prospect of being denied entrance into many universities who look to SACS to validate a school system’s ability to educate the student body. As a result, Governor Sonny Purdue removed four board members due in large part to the report SACS released. While the system regained their accreditation, it will remain on probation through 2011.

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## **Sen. Grant Works to Put Quality Peace Officers on Georgia’s Streets**

By Katie Wright

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010) – Today, State Sen. Johnny Grant (R-Milledgeville) lead the Senate to unanimously pass legislation that allows law enforcement agencies to require more stringent background checks when hiring new officers. Senate Bill 373 will ensure a higher caliber of officers throughout Georgia.

“When budgets are tight, it is even more important to hire quality officers that can be trusted,” said Grant. “I believe this legislation will go a long way to ensuring tax dollars are not wasted on officers who do not stand up to the standards we expect and deserve.”

This legislation strengthens law enforcement agencies’ ability to hire and retain quality peace officers. It will require an employer to disclose employment-related information to an investigating law enforcement agency when a search is being conducted on hiring or certifying a police officer. Several police chiefs and sheriffs joined with Grant in support of the bill.

Frank V. Rotondo, Executive Director of the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police offered his support saying that “I am elated SB 373 passed unanimously in the Senate and I look forward to watching it pass the House and ultimately reach the governor. I believe an applicant’s past conduct is indicative of how they will conduct themselves as a law enforcement officer.”

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## **Working Families Legislative Caucus sounds Alarm on Budget Crisis, calls for Common Sense Relief Remedies**

By Jennifer Kitt

ATLANTA (March 25, 2010) – Sen. Nan Orrock (D-Atlanta), Rep. Virgil Fludd (D-Tyrone) and Rep. Debbie Buckner (D-Junction City) joined members of the Working Families Legislative Caucus today to sound the alarm on Georgia's budget crisis and call for common sense remedies that provide relief. In the face of current budget proposals that balance the state budget on the backs of Georgia's working families, children, sick, the elderly, people with disabilities, students, teachers and public servants, caucus members called for strategies to raise more than \$1 billion to avoid cuts threatening millions of vulnerable Georgians.



“In Fiscal Year 2009, we passed a balanced budget of over \$20 million based on state revenues alone,” said Orrock. “Due to declining revenues in FY 2010 and FY 2011, we are facing an annual shortfall of over \$4.5 billion, with proposals to cut more than \$2 billion in essential state programs and services each year. The picture is even worse for next year, when we will be facing cuts of \$3 billion if we don’t act now. These numbers may be mind numbing, but the real pain these cuts are inflicting across this state are very real. Just a few examples paint a stark picture of a safety net for Georgia’s families that cannot be sustained at a time when needs are soaring.”

- Last year, the demand for food stamps increased by one third, yet eligibility caseworkers were not increased. These workers were furloughed for 12 days and struggled to carry the expanded caseloads in fewer days with less pay. This year, leadership is proposing to slash eligibility workers such as TANF assistance, Medicaid and food stamps even further. The effect is to choke off assistance at the start and leave people out in the cold in their time of greatest need.
- For seniors and people with disabilities languishing in institutions, help is being cut off and funds for community supports have been decimated. Last week, more cuts were announced when the Alzheimer’s respite program was slashed an additional 20,500 hours, Adult Protective Services that protects disabled adults and elders from abuse were reduced, 34,200 trips for seniors to medical care and other desperately needed transportation were eliminated, and funds to help seniors leave nursing homes to return to their communities ended.
- Teachers and other public servants have been bearing the weight of the budget cuts by enduring more than a week of furlough days, with thousands of teachers and public servants facing the loss of their jobs in FY 2010 across the state.
- Domestic violence shelters, county health departments, health care for children aging out of foster care, home and community based services all face more cuts when they are already unable to meet basic needs for women and children.

Education, which is often touted as our top priority, has suffered billions in cuts every year. The effect on Georgia’s achievement scores that are already competing for last place among the states is immeasurable for our children growing up during the years of this recession. We are failing to invest in our children’s future. We are cutting education at every level from pre-K through higher education, stunting the growth and development of an entire generation.

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*Continued from Working Families, Page 7*

“Three simple measures would raise over \$1 billion this year alone. House Bill 1066 would adopt a temporary 1 percent surcharge on the wealthiest 1 percent of Georgians’ earnings over \$400,000 each year,” said Fludd. “This measure alone would generate \$225 million each year. This approach of a surcharge on the wealthiest earners was adopted by eight states last year, including North Carolina.”

Fludd further proposed that “Georgia should stop the inequitable policy of allowing taxpayers who itemize to deduct their state income taxes. This would generate \$450 million per year and allow Georgia to join the 32 states that disallow this practice. It is a particularly irrational policy since it benefits those taxpayers who need it least.”

Buckner supported HB 39, which increases Georgia’s tobacco tax by \$1 per pack. This tax increase would raise over \$350 million in new revenue and bring Georgia up from 45th in the U.S. to reach the national average.

“This measure would reduce smoking and deter teens from beginning to smoke with immediate and lasting health benefits,” said Buckner. “This increase would help offset the more than \$537 million in Medicaid funds Georgia spends every year on tobacco related illnesses.”

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## **Senator Butterworth Appointed Chairman of State and Local Government Committee**

By Katie Wright

ATLANTA (March 25, 2010) – State Sen. Jim Butterworth (R-Clarksesville) was recently appointed chairman of the Senate Committee on State and Local Government by Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle and the Committee on Assignments. This appointment became necessary after Senator Lee Hawkins resigned from the State Senate to run for higher office.

“In the short time Senator Butterworth has served in the Senate, he has proven that he is a capable leader who delivers results. I’m confident in Senator Butterworth’s ability to chair this committee and look forward to all he will accomplish,” said Lt. Governor Casey Cagle.

“I am honored by this appointment and look forward to working with local leaders on legislation that will further develop policies throughout our state,” said Butterworth. “I would like to thank Lt. Gov. Cagle for the opportunity to serve as chairman and look forward to leading this committee.”



Jurisdictions for the committee include special taxes, city and county organization and powers, subdivisions, and administration of special districts. The committee considers legislation for not only state government operations, but also counties and cities across the state.

Sen. Butterworth has served on the State and Local Government Committee since 2008 as an ex-officio member. He has also served as secretary of the Senate Economic Development Committee and secretary of the Senate Banking and Financial Institutions committee.

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## Need-Based Students Get Lift from Senate with HOPE College Opportunity Grant

By Raegan Weber

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010) - SB 496, The HOPE College Opportunity Grant, passed the Senate today with an overwhelming majority. Sen. Jack Hill (R-Reidsville), the bill's author, went to bat for need based students throughout Georgia by proposing the grant which will be based solely on need.

"This is a 'stay in college grant' that probably only amounts to a few hundred dollars, but will certainly help the neediest students in Georgia. These grants will aid students who require our help most as the economy continues to falter and tuition begins to rise," said Hill. "By giving these students a needed hand, we are cementing a brighter future of our state's education system and economy; what we put in today is indeed an investment in the future of our state."



"During this economic downturn, we want to proactively look for ways to support our college students who struggle the most to afford their tuition. Education provides the foundation that is necessary to develop and maintain a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce in Georgia. And we are committed to growing and expanding our workforce in Georgia so that we will lead in job growth and workforce readiness. Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Jack Hill has led on this issue and I want to thank him for his hard work and efforts to provide assistance to our neediest college students," said Lt. Governor Casey Cagle.

In order to be eligible for the HOPE College Opportunity Grant, students must also be eligible for a Pell Grant during any term they apply for the grant. They must be full-time students attending eligible public postsecondary institution and meet enrollment standards including maintaining satisfactory academic progress.

The bill also notes certain residency requirements for grant applicants. The student must be classified as legal Georgia residents under the institution's in-state tuition policy. Any student who is a Georgia resident at the time of their high school graduation must have met the residency requirements for at least 12 months prior to the first day of classes for which the HOPE grant is awarded. For any non-Georgia resident, this term is extended to 24 months. Additionally, dependent children of military personnel stationed in Georgia, who graduate from a Georgia high school or home study program, will be deemed Georgia residents.

The HOPE College Opportunity Grant is available until the student has earned a baccalaureate degree or until the student has attempted 190 quarter hours or 127 semester hours. The grant may be applied to any portion of the student's cost of attendance.

Hill noted that 30 million in lottery funds are available to be set aside for this beneficial scholarship fund. Funding for the grant is based on appropriations, as well as how a specific student's need might change over their higher education career. □

## Sen. Gloria Butler Appointed Chairman of Urban Affairs Committee

By Jennifer Kitt

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010) – Sen. Gloria Butler (D-Stone Mountain) has been appointed as the chairman of the Senate Urban Affairs Committee. Butler was appointed to the position after the resignation of former chairman David Adelman.

“I am honored to serve as the chairman for the Urban Affairs Committee,” said Butler. “We have a lot of work to do, and I’m ready to join my fellow committee members in creating legislation that will benefit our great state.”

The Urban Affairs Committee is responsible for addressing issues that directly impact the metro Atlanta area. Topics of interest can range from transportation, public safety, healthcare and economic development.



“This committee gives the state an opportunity to understand the issues and concerns dealing with the metro Atlanta area,” said Butler. “With our current budget crisis, this committee will be a key player in fixing the state and Atlanta’s economic situation.”

Sen. Butler worked with the Urban Affairs Committee to create legislation that improved economic development in the metro area. Last year the governor signed into law Butler’s Senate Bill 89, which legalizes the consumption of food and beverages in Georgia’s rapid rail stations and intermodal bus stations. She will continue to work with the committee to create innovative legislation that will move the state and the metro area forward. □

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## Senate Passes Sen. Thomas’ Bear Bill

By Katie Wright

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010) – Sen. Don Thomas’ (R-Dalton) legislation that allows citizens who strike and kill a bear or deer with their vehicle to keep that animal. Senate Bill 474 passed with a vote of 41-2.

“I am pleased that the Senate voted to pass this bill allowing citizens to keep the animals they accidentally kill,” said Thomas. “This is a true example of a constituent prompting legislation, this is democracy in action.”

Under this legislation, any person may lawfully possess native wildlife which has been accidentally killed by a motor vehicle as long as the person taking possession of a deer or bear accidentally killed by a motor vehicle notifies the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or a law enforcement officer within 48 hours. This legislation protects animals designated as a protected species.

This legislation prohibits running bears with dogs, except during the open season for hunting bears with dogs. This is an addition to the current law, which prohibits running deer with dogs, except during the open season for hunting deer with dogs. □



## **Cagle, Republican Senate Caucus Encourage Perdue to Move Forward with Healthcare Lawsuit**

By Jaillene Hunter

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010)-Lt. Governor Casey Cagle and the Republican members of the State Senate today issued a joint statement urging Governor Sonny Perdue to move forward and join the lawsuit filed by over a dozen bipartisan attorneys general challenging the constitutionality of the federal healthcare reform legislation, regardless of Attorney General Thurbert Baker's refusal to act.

The lawsuit filed yesterday in Pensacola, Florida, challenges Congressional authority under the U.S. Constitution to enact an individual mandate compelling citizens to purchase health insurance or face large fines. The lawsuit also charges the healthcare overhaul infringes on the sovereignty of states and will cripple state budgets.

"The healthcare legislation passed Sunday and signed into law represents an unprecedented expansion of the federal government's authority. This bill will devastate our nation's economy by creating \$50 billion in tax increases, cutting benefits to senior citizens and violating individual citizens' right to choose their own healthcare. Today, we stand in strong support of Governor Sonny Perdue and his ability to move forward with protecting Georgia's citizens from this overreaching and financially disastrous legislation."

"In addition to the questionable constitutionality of the bill, the unfunded mandates in the healthcare reform will cripple Georgia's economic recovery. We have already witnessed a massive state budget shortfall caused by deteriorating economic conditions and dramatically lower tax revenue, and face difficult choices this legislative session. Unlike Washington, our state constitution requires us to balance the budget each year. Under the healthcare reform legislation, Georgia will face billions of dollars in additional Medicaid costs, potentially forcing draconian cuts to critical programs like education and public safety.

"The unfortunate reality is that under the new federally mandated healthcare policy, no amount of cutting will bring our state budget into balance. Therefore the only alternative would be to force massive tax increases on Georgians who will have to shoulder this federal program's financial burden. That is an alternative our state cannot afford and that our Caucus will not accept.



"Ignoring this new law will not make its substantial consequences go away. We strongly support Governor Perdue's direction to Attorney General Thurbert Baker, and in light of Baker's refusal to act, urge Governor Perdue to move forward and stand up against this unprecedented attack on our citizens' liberty and our state's sovereignty."

The Senate Republican Caucus is comprised of Senators Don Balfour, John Bulloch, Jim Butterworth, Buddy Carter, Ronnie Chance, Jeff Chapman, Bill Cowser, John Crosby, John Douglas, Greg Goggans, Johnny Grant, Bill Hamrick, Seth Harp, Bill Heath, Jack Hill, Judson Hill, Ralph Hudgens, Bill Jackson, Dan Moody, Jeff Mullis, Jack Murphy, Chip Pearson, Chip Rogers, Mitch Seabaugh, David Shafer, Preston Smith, Cecil Staton, Don Thomas, Ross Tolleson, Renee Unterman, Dan Weber, John Wiles and Tommie Williams.

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## Sen. Judson Hill's Guidelines for Federal Health Care in Georgia Government Passes Senate



By Matt Colvin

MARIETTA (March 26, 2010) – Legislation passed the Georgia Senate today (30-16) strictly prohibiting any state department or agency from implementing the recently-passed federal health care measure without providing the Georgia General Assembly with a cost-benefit analysis and the financial impact to the taxpayers. State Sen. Judson Hill (R-Marietta) authored Senate Bill 399 which would require the House and Senate to expressly approve any agency's plan to utilize the

federal plan for its employee's health care coverage.

“Unlike our Democratic leaders in Washington D.C, Georgia is working on free-market solutions to bring down costs and expand access for many uninsured or underinsured Georgians,” said Hill. “We have worked hard to develop a world-class health care system here in Georgia. Any implementation of the federal plan has the severe chance of undermining our progress towards a better system for Georgians, aside from the fact it infringes on state powers. My bill places a strict set of parameters before any state agency if they decide to go forward with adopting the federal policy without making a significant case before the legislature.”

Hill's legislation would ban any state department or agency from employing any part of any federal health care reform unless the department or agency first gives a financial report to the General Assembly. The required report would have to include any details federal reform provision requirements, whether the provision has any state waiver, any effects their actions would have on Georgia and its citizens, and the consequences for not complying. SB 399 also directs that state agencies would be able to adopt federal plans if the General Assembly specifically authorizes the federal reform provision in Georgia.

“Regardless of what state agencies decide to do, I will remain strongly committed to providing Georgians true health care reform, adopting free-market principles designed to expand access to quality care, increase choices with a competitive market for health insurance, and keep costs low free of any Federal involvement, said Hill.”

SB 399 will now heads to the Georgia House of Representatives for consideration.

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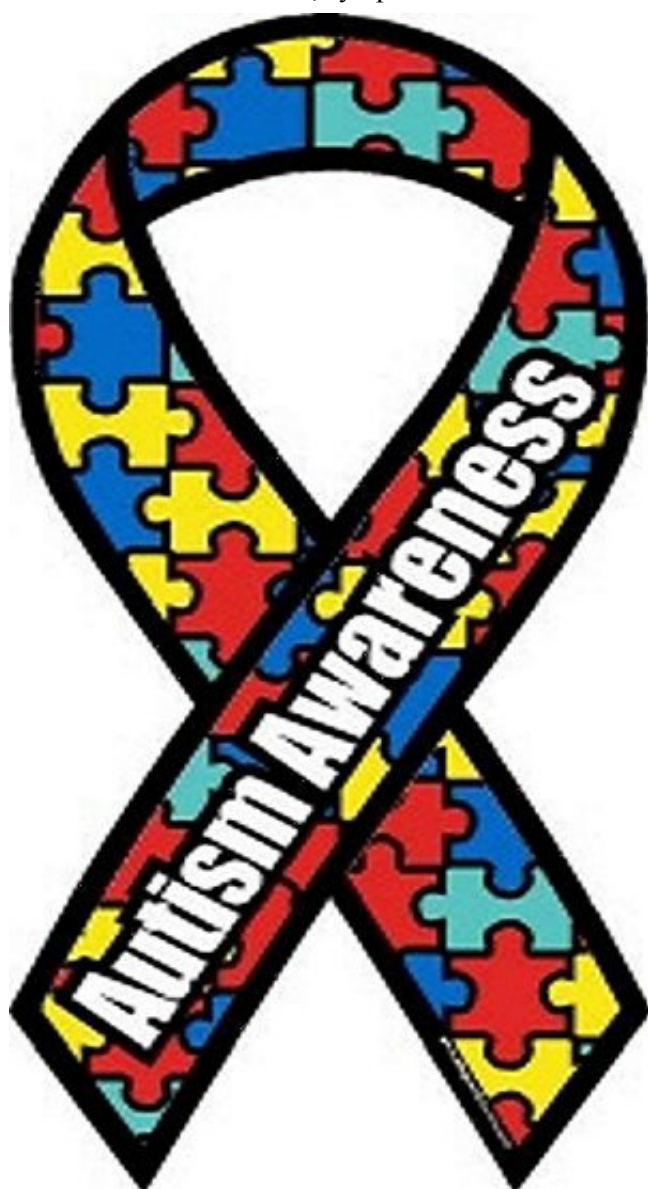
## Sen. Grant fights for Autistic Children in Senate

By Katie Wright

ATLANTA (March 26, 2010) – Today, State Sen. Johnny Grant (R-Milledgeville) led the charge for a state effort to manage autism. Senate Bill 161 establishes an Autism Taskforce that will develop a plan to educate and inform parents, families and health care professionals about early intervention and treatment of autism.

“Autism is a very prevalent condition that, if caught early can help children and their families have a better quality of life with recovered functions that are often impaired by autism,” said Grant. “It is our duty to inform the public about diagnosing and treating such a common disease as autism.”

"Autism is a tragic condition that so many children suffer across the nation. Everyday we are learning more about the detection, symptoms and care of autism in children. Early diagnosis is the key to minimizing the devastating effects in children. Georgia is making great strides in helping parents and families learn about and manage this disease. I commend Senator Grant for leading the development and management of the Autism Taskforce," said President Pro Tempore Tommie Williams.



Autism is part of a group of developmental disabilities that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. The condition affects one on 100 children and it has a potential life time cost of \$3.4 million. Early intervention and treatment can lower the lifetime cost to \$600,000 per person.

SB 161 creates a twenty-one member statewide Autism Taskforce within the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. The Taskforce's responsibilities include:

SB 161 creates a twenty-one member statewide Autism Taskforce within the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. The Taskforce's responsibilities include:

- ✦ Developing a plan to educate the public and health care professionals about the advantages and methods of early screening, early intervention, diagnosis, and treatment of autism
- ✦ Educating parents regarding available diagnostics, as well as services and funding sources
- ✦ Recommending the implementation of a cost-effective plan for early screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism and its related syndromes
- Recommending the implementation of a disease management program

The bill will now move to the House for consideration. □

# Senate Passes Resolution to Honor North Georgians

By Natalie Strong

ATLANTA (March 26,2010)- Thanks to the efforts of Sen. Jeff Mullis (R- Chickamauga) and the Georgia State Senate, the citizens of northwest Georgia are one step closer to honoring some of its greatest heroes and brightest assets with the dedication of area highways, intersections, and bridges in their name.

“It is important that we take every opportunity to recognize the individuals and businesses’ that have spent their time and talents to build and improve the small corner of Georgia that we call home. Our area is rich in Georgia history, and is home to some of our most dedicated public servants and economic blessings,” said Mullis. “I am grateful to my colleagues in the Senate for supporting this resolution, and look forward to seeing this bill successfully through the House.”

Senate Resolution 1075, which passed unanimously, establishes the dedication of the following sections of highways, intersections, or bridges:

- SR 1 from its intersection with SR 48 in Summerville north through LaFayette on US Highway 27/SR 1 north through Shields Cross Road, US Highway 27/SR 1, to the intersection of Old LaFayette Road and Frank Gleason Highway will be dedicated as the CSA Army of Tennessee Highway. This corridor of the highway follows the route of march for the army that fought in the Battle of Chickamauga. The Battle of Chickamauga was fought September 19-20, 1863, and involved more than 150,000 soldiers of the Northern and Southern armies.
- The intersection at Long Hollow Road and US 27/SR1 will be dedicated as the Frank M. Gleason Memorial Intersection. The Honorable Frank Milton Gleason served with distinction in various leadership roles in Walker and surrounding counties in Northwest Georgia, and was instrumental in establishing several banks in the area.
- The bridge on SR 113 at the Etowah River just west of Cartersville will be dedicated as the E.R. Bates Memorial Bridge. Mr. Eli Robert “E.R.” Bates, Jr. served during World War II and then took over his father’s business, Bates Hardware Company, where he worked until his retirement in 1973.
- The bridge on US 280/SR 27 in Webster County over Lanahassee Creek will be dedicated as the Sheriff George Edward Goare Memorial Bridge. Goare was elected Sheriff of Webster County in 1972. He was tragically killed in the line of duty on April 11, 1985.
- The portion of SR 36 from Henderson Mill Road to SR 212 in Newton County will be dedicated as the Roy and Aaron Varner Highway. Varner was elected chairman of the Newton County Board of commissioners in 1977 and served until 1992.
- The portion of Georgia Highway 36 from its intersection with State Route 212 to the Newton/Butts County line will be dedicated as the J. Sid Garner Memorial Highway. Garner was a United States Air Force Officer whose military career included service in World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War.
- The portion of I-75 in Henry County from one mile north of Exit 212 to one mile south of Exit 212 will be dedicated as the Tanger Outlet Center Highway. Tanger is celebrating over 28 years as a leading developer of manufacturers’ outlet centers with the nation’s premier brand name and designer outlet stores. The outlet center continues to bring diverse economic activity and jobs to the area.
- The portion of State Highway 19 from its intersection with Pio Nono Avenue to its intersection with New Street in the City of Macon will be dedicated as Duane Allman Boulevard. Duane Allman, famed guitarist of the Allman Brothers Band, was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident in Macon in 1971.

□

# Legislative Process Dates

## Important Dates in the Legislative Process

**Introduction** - Last day to file and/or 1st Read in Senate.

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - last day to introduce General Senate bills and resolutions (even year). [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - last day to accept General House bills and resolutions. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - last day to introduce General Senate bills and resolutions (odd year). [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

*\*Note: Senate bills and resolutions must be filed with the Secretary before 4:00 p.m. to be 1st read on the next legislative day.*

## Deadlines for passage in current year

**Committee Report Deadlines** - Last day to read report. Report submitted to Secretary by convening.

**28<sup>th</sup> day** - General Senate bills and resolutions.

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - Local Senate bills and resolutions.

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - General House bills and resolutions.

**40<sup>th</sup> day** - Local House bills and resolutions.

### **Calendar Management**

Calendar in numerical order after 2nd reading of legislation; days 1-5. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

Rules Committee sets the calendar for days 6 - 40. [Rule 4-2.10 (b)]

### **General Senate Bills and Resolutions**

**26<sup>th</sup> day** - File with Secretary of the Senate. [Rule 3-1.2 (a)]

**27<sup>th</sup> day** - 1st Reading and referral to committee. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**28<sup>th</sup> day** - Committee report read upon convening. (A recommitted bill already 2nd read - report day 29.)

**29<sup>th</sup> day** - 2nd Reading. [Rule 4-2.6]

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - Passage [Rule 4-2.10 (a)] and immediate transmittal to House. [Rule 4-2.14]

### **Local Senate Bills and Resolutions**

**35<sup>th</sup> day** - File with Secretary of the Senate. [3-1.2 (a)]

**36<sup>th</sup> day** - 1st Reading and referral to committee. (Cannot pass for 2 days.) [Rule 4-2.4 (c) ]

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report by committee, passage and immediate transmittal to the House. [Rule 4-2.14]

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - 2nd Reading in House.

**40<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report and passage in House.

### **General House Bills and Resolutions**

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - Transmitted from House and received by Secretary.

**31<sup>st</sup> day** - 1st Reading and referral to committee. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report upon convening and 2nd reading. (Applies to days 36 - 38) [Rule 4-2.6]

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - Passage. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

**40<sup>th</sup> day** - Passage of bills or resolutions tabled day 39; removed from the table on day 40. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

### **Local House Bills and Resolutions**

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - 1<sup>st</sup> Reading and referral to committee.

**40<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report by committee and passage.

*\* Note: On the 30th day and on the last three days of session, bills and resolutions needing action from the House are automatically immediately transmitted. [Rule 4-2.14]*

**40<sup>th</sup> day** - Passage of bills or resolutions tabled day 39; removed from the table on day 40. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]